

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-17

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FM AMEMBASSY SANTIAGO

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 4144

C O N F I D E N T I A L SANTIAGO 1804

EO 11652: GDS

TAGS: ECON CI

SUBJ: PROGRESS TOWARD RATIONING IS SLOW AND OMINOUS

REF: SANTIAGO 1397

(BEGIN UNCLASSIFIED)

1. AIRFORCE GENERAL BACHELET, HEAD OF NATIONAL DISTRIBUTION SECRETARIAT, PERIODICALLY CONFIRMS PUBLICLY THAT HIS ORGANIZATION IS CONTINUING TO PREPARE FOR " RATIONALIZATION" OF SCARE FOOD AND OTHER ITEMS, BUT NOW SAYS " RATIONING CARDS WILL BE USED ONLY IN CASE OF EXTREME NECESSITY AND ONLY TEMPORARILY." BACHELET HAS IDENTIFIED MEAT AND MILK PRODUCTS, COOKING OIL, RICE, COFFEE, TEA AND PASTA AS SHORTAGE PRODUCTS. HE SAYS BEFORE DISTRIBUTION CAN BE " RATIONALIZED," NEIGHBORHOOD SURVEYS MUST DETERMINE NUMBERS OF PEOPLE TO BE SUPPLIED, GOC MUST ESTABLISH PER CAPITA CONSUMPTION LEVELS AND EQUAL ACCESS TO SCARCE GOODS ESTABLISHED. (END UNCLASSIFIED)

2. (BEGIN CONFIDENTIAL) COMMENT: LITTLE VISIBLE PROGRESS HAS BEEN MADE BY SECRETARIAT IN GETTING ORGANIZED FOR RATIONING. THERE IS ALSO GROWING SCEPTICISM AMONG SOME CHILEANS THAT RATIONING UNDER BACHELET' S SUPERVISION WILL BE IMPARTIALLY ADMINISTERED. IN RECENT PRESS INTERVIEW, HE REVERSED HIS ORIGINAL POSITION THAT JAPS WILL PLAY MINOR ROLE AND GAVE THEM SPECIAL STATUS AS GOC CHOSEN INSTRUMENT.
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HE RECENTLY CALLED SOME OPPOSITION- CONTROLLED NEIGHBORHOOD COMMITTEES (RIVALS TO COMMUNIST- CONTROLLED JAPS) " FASCISTS." BACHELET HAS MADE OTHER PARTISAN REMRAKS AND THEN TRIED TO REVERT TO A SIMPLE TECHNICIAN WHEN TAKEN TO TASK BY OPPOSITION.

3. GOC' S ORIGINAL RATIONING PLAN ANNOUNCED JAN 10 BY MINISTER FLORES WAS POLITICALLY DISCRIMINATORY AND WAS LARGELY TO BE RUN BY JAPS. INVOLVEMENT OF MILITARY IN RATIONING RAISED HOPES OF SOME THAT DISTRIBUTION WOULD BE EQUITABLE. GOC POLICY NOW SEEMS TO BE SWINGING TOWARD ORIGINAL FLORES POSITION AGAIN. POLICE WERE INSTRUCTED RECENTLY TO STOP INTERFERING WITH MERCHANTS WHO WERE SELLING SCARCE GOODS ONLY TO JAP MEMBERS, WHEREAS BACHELET HAD EARLIER PROMISED SUCH PRACTICE WOULD NOT BE PERMITTED. IF RATION CARDS ARE NOT USED, IT WILL BE EASIER TO CONTINUE ABUSES OF THIS TYPE. IN SUM, BACHELET, PROBABLY UNDER HEAVY DAILY PRESSURE FROM VARIOUS UP SOURCES NOW THAT MILITARY HAVE LEFT CABINET, APPEARS LESS AND LESS LIKELY TO BE EFFECTIVE SAFEGUARD AGAINST POLITIZATION OF FOOD DISTRIBUTION PROCESS. DAVIS

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